UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1999/621
28 May 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SIXTH REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By paragraph 3 of its resolution 1230 (1999) of 26 February 1999, the Security Council decided to review every 45 days, on the basis of reports of the Secretary-General, the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) in the light of the progress achieved towards implementation of commitments made by the President of the Central African Republic to the Secretary-General in his letter dated 23 January 1999 (S/1999/98, annex).

2. In accordance with paragraph 18 of resolution 1230 (1999), the first report was submitted to the Council on 14 April 1999 (S/1999/416). The present report describes developments in the Central African Republic since that time.

II. POLITICAL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

3. Despite the impasse over the distribution of posts in its Bureau described in my last report (S/1999/416, para. 3), the National Assembly has been functioning normally during the reporting period, and has taken action on a number of matters, including the modification of the electoral code, and the reform of the armed forces and of the economy. These are described in more detail below.

Establishment of the Mixed and Independent Electoral Commission

4. Much of the political activity since my last report has concerned the establishment, functioning and membership of the Mixed and Independent Electoral Commission, which is responsible for the organization and conduct of the elections. The inauguration of the Commission, which was eventually held on 19 May with the swearing-in of its members, had been seriously delayed as a result of a series of disagreements between the Mouvance présidentielle and the opposition, as well as internal splits. The Commission has 27 members, including 9 members each from the Mouvance présidentielle and the opposition, with other members representing government ministries and independents.

99-15515 (E) 280599

5. In my last report (paras. 10-12), I described the objections expressed by the opposition arising from President Patassé's decision to entrust the administration of the Commission in the provinces to the sous-préfets, who are considered loyal to him. As a result of these objections, and following interventions by MINURCA and the donor community, the President issued a decree on 1 May establishing a control mechanism designed to ensure the impartial functioning of the Commission.

6. The Commission must now as a matter of urgency take a number of decisions on the organization and conduct of the elections, including the date of the polling, the electoral budget and the modalities of voting, none of which have yet been resolved. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which bears the main responsibility for the coordination of electoral assistance, is working with the Commission and MINURCA to produce a budget.

7. In its revision of the electoral code, the National Assembly has reportedly taken into account many of the proposals made by MINURCA and the donors as a result of their study of the legislative elections. In particular, agreement seems likely to be reached on the use of a single ballot paper, provided the costs of training and voter education are covered. Donors have indicated their readiness to meet these costs.

Human rights

8. During the reporting period, the MINURCA human rights section focused mainly on the organization of a national seminar on the impact of human rights in the reconstruction process. The section also continued the implementation of its ongoing projects in the field of human rights education and technical assistance, particularly the mass awareness campaign on Radio MINURCA and the training programme for the national police, with the aim of disseminating human rights concepts and principles. The section continued with its twice-weekly broadcast of human rights information and education programmes in French and Sango on Radio MINURCA.

9. The human rights section has also developed plans for a national seminar on the impact of human rights in the national reconstruction process, now scheduled for 31 May to 2 June 1999, at Bangui. This project was prepared within the framework of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), with a view to adopting a national plan of action for human rights education and promotion. All partners and participants have agreed on several human rights themes, including development, elections, the administration of justice, law enforcement officials and security forces, women, children, refugees, media and trade unions. This diversity of themes will help in identifying needs and setting priorities in principal areas of human rights promotion and protection in the Central African Republic. The section is also preparing another training programme for newly recruited police officers, scheduled in the coming months.

Information

10. The Public Information Staff Office has been providing briefings to the media and general public, as well as schools, upon request during this reporting period. The topics of the briefings are: United Nations: creation and role;

peacekeeping operations; and MINURCA: its mandate in the Central African Republic.

11. Besides the organization of a weekly press conference, the public information section also issues a monthly letter, Lege Ti Siriri (Road to peace), in English, French and Sango. It also prepares a weekly press review that disseminates information on MINURCA and the United Nations as reflected in the local and international press.

12. A series of meetings between United Nations agencies and State broadcasters was initiated to improve cooperation and the flow of information between both sides. A new radio programme is planned, focusing on the armed forces of the Central African Republic; it is expected to take the form of a twice-weekly half-hour show called "Tous ensemble". Provision has been made in the Radio MINURCA schedule for regular programming devoted to the Electoral Commission and the electoral activities of MINURCA.

United Nations presence after the Mission

13. By paragraph 17 of its resolution 1230 (1999), the Security Council requested me to consider, in keeping with the statement of its President of 29 December 1998 (S/PRST/1998/38), what role the United Nations might play in the transition from peacekeeping to post-conflict peace-building in the Central African Republic, and further requested me, in consultation with the Government of the Central African Republic, to submit recommendations on a possible United Nations presence in the Central African Republic after the termination of MINURCA.

14. Although the Secretariat has undertaken extensive consultations on this matter with various partners, including UNDP, it would appear premature at this time to submit detailed recommendations to the Council on a post-MINURCA presence of the United Nations. In general terms, however, and subject to the results of the presidential election and the developing situation within the Central African Republic, I might envisage the establishment of a small political office at Bangui following the withdrawal of MINURCA. The functions of this office could include:

(a) Facilitating continued dialogue and reconciliation, especially among the various political actors, with a view to ensuring national unity, particularly during the post-election phase;

(b) Supporting all efforts, including those of civil society, aimed at consolidating and strengthening the democratization process and promoting good governance and the rule of law;

(c) Helping to mobilize international political and financial support for the implementation of the economic, social and security reforms undertaken by the Government;

(d) Providing the political framework and focal point for integrating the activities of the United Nations system in the country in support of the Government's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, police

training, human rights and culture of peace programmes, and other post-conflict peace-building programmes.

15. In view of the need to continue to assist the Central African Republic in the conduct of security-related reforms, it may be necessary to attach a military adviser and a civilian police adviser to the office. Special consideration should also be given to enhanced international assistance to support the national police and gendarmerie, to enable them to derive maximum benefit from the training they have received during the mandate of MINURCA. I will revert to the Council with more detailed proposals at an appropriate time.

III. UNITED NATIONS ROLE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Concept of operations

16. In paragraph 9 of its resolution 1230 (1999), the Security Council authorized MINURCA to play a supportive role in the conduct of the elections, in conformity with the tasks previously performed during the legislative elections of November and December 1998, recognizing the major responsibility which UNDP will have in the coordination of electoral assistance.

17. The MINURCA concept of operations for the support of the elections involves the deployment of international electoral observers in Bangui and at a total of 10 sites throughout the countryside, to observe all the stages of the electoral process. These include the electoral campaign, the distribution and operation of the polling sites, the casting of the ballots in two rounds (expected to be set three weeks apart), the retrieval and counting of ballot papers and the announcement of the results.

18. As I indicated in my last report (paras. 13-16), MINURCA has continued, pending the inauguration of the Electoral Commission, to refine and update its plans for electoral support. Many of these refinements derive from the lessons learned from the November and December elections, and are intended to rectify deficiencies in the quality of the support provided at that time. The MINURCA electoral unit is now in the process of being re-established with a staff of three, although difficulties and delays in recruitment persist.

19. The Secretariat's preparations for the elections take into account the size and administrative structure of the country and the poor state of its communications and transportation, especially outside the capital. The Central African Republic has a surface area of some 623,000 square kilometres and an estimated voting population of some 1.5 million. At least 2,500 polling stations will be in operation in the 16 prefectural regions and 69 sub-prefectural districts outside the capital, and in Bangui's eight arrondissements during the election. The presidential elections are expected to be held during the rainy season, when the difficulties, delays and risks of transporting personnel and sensitive materials across the country will be intensified.

Location and staffing of sites

20. As outlined in my last report (paras. 13-16), MINURCA would expect to establish eight permanent observation sites and two temporary sites throughout the country as bases for monitoring activities. To these sites would be deployed a small number of long-term electoral observers, starting early in June. MINURCA has established that the minimum number of long-term observers to ensure an acceptable level of observation is 30.

21. It is further planned to deploy up to 200 short-term observers for an intensive observation of the polling period, starting 14 days before the first round of voting, and the same number for the second round, if required. The date of the first round, while not yet fixed by the Electoral Commission, is expected to be early in September, in accordance with the Constitution of the Central African Republic. Of the 200 observers to be deployed, about half would be recruited locally from MINURCA, UNDP, embassies, consulates, non-governmental organizations and other international organizations in the country, the remaining 100 to be drawn from United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations offices, predominantly in Africa and Europe. At each site, there would be one civilian site coordinator, two or three long-term observers (22 in the field and 8 in Bangui), and one security officer, in addition to the military personnel.

22. The civilian observers would be deployed once the observation sites had been prepared and their security ensured by the deployment of a limited number of MINURCA and national troops and the necessary equipment. MINURCA would therefore propose to deploy at each of six of the permanent sites - Berberati, Kaga Bandoro, Bangassou, Bossangoa, Bozoum and Mobaye - 34 military personnel to provide basic security, communications, medical services, movement control, aviation and fuel services, and other logistic needs. At the remaining two permanent sites, Bouar and Bambari, which will also serve as regional logistics bases, MINURCA will deploy 41 personnel, including additional transportation-related specialists. Ten personnel will be deployed at each of the two temporary sites, for a total of 306 MINURCA military personnel at all sites. A total of 26 vehicles - three for each permanent site and one each at the temporary sites - will also be positioned.

23. The Secretariat has approached potential troop contributors to request the deployment of the additional specialists in logistics and communications envisaged in my last report. These would replace the 80 additional troops provided by France for logistical and medical support and the 16 additional communications specialists provided by Canada in support of the legislative elections in 1998. Revised calculations indicate that, to ensure the same services at an increased number of sites, 68 logistical personnel and 32 communications experts would be required, to be deployed two months before the first round and repatriated two weeks after the second round. The estimated total deployment duration would therefore be 13 weeks.

24. Also as outlined in my last report, and in accordance with paragraph 11 of resolution 1230 (1999), the number of Central African armed forces troops to be deployed in support of the election under United Nations supervision and rules of engagement will be increased to 360. Of these, 240 would be deployed to the

electoral sites, and 120 would remain in Bangui as a quick reaction capability and to guard sensitive electoral materials.

Additional military, security and logistical requirements

25. It is envisaged that the additional communications and logistics personnel would be provided by Canada and Egypt, respectively. Currently, I envisage that these personnel could be accommodated within the existing authorized force structure of MINURCA of 1,350 military personnel. However, if the security situation during the tense period preceding the elections deteriorates, I would not hesitate to recommend to the Council an increase in the current force structure to ensure the safety of United Nations personnel and of the electoral process.

26. Potential donors have also been approached concerning the provision of voluntary contributions to the support of the Central African armed forces troops assisting MINURCA. Their requirements include uniforms, boots and other personal gear, as well as airlift, medical support and rations at an estimated cost of some $600,000. It is envisaged that those troops would be deployed to the sites one month prior to the first round and remain until two weeks after the second round, for a duration in the field of nine weeks.

27. To enable it to respond adequately to any disturbances during the electoral campaign, MINURCA would also seek to enhance its equipment. Additional requirements would include armoured personnel carriers, to be divided among seven companies; one hard-skinned ambulance; an armoured vehicle equipped with a blade to clear roadblocks; night-vision devices; and other equipment.

28. Additional air assets will also be essential to the success of the monitoring operation. In addition to the two fixed-wing aircraft already at the disposal of MINURCA, the mission will require the temporary use of helicopters, including for medical and casualty evacuations. It is envisaged that all the helicopters will be deployed before the first round. There will also be a need for additional fixed-wing aircraft and related equipment, and some runway renovation work would be essential. In any event, adverse weather conditions during the electoral period and the absence of any meteorological infrastructure are expected to result in flight delays and cancellations, and will require the most stringent safety precautions.

IV. MILITARY AND SECURITY ASPECTS

29. The Central African Republic and its capital, Bangui, have remained calm during the reporting period. However, as a result of the agreement reached at Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on 18 April, Chad has begun to withdraw its troops, estimated at 2,000 strong, from the northern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Part of the Chadian force crossed the Oubangi River from Zongo to Bangui, and then proceeded across the territory of the Central African Republic into Chad, starting in May, under MINURCA monitoring.

30. MINURCA anticipates that, as the Chadians withdraw, the Congolese rebels could advance as far as Zongo, which is directly across the river from Bangui.

MINURCA will watch this evolving situation closely in view of its potential implications for the security situation within the Central African Republic, and on the country's southern border.

Disarmament

31. The rate of recovery of arms by the disarmament committees supported by UNDP and MINURCA has slowed, apparently owing to the lack of funding. As at May 1999, about 62 per cent of light weapons and almost 95 per cent of heavy weapons taken from the Government during the mutinies of 1996 had been recovered. However, there are thought to be many more weapons clandestinely in private hands.

32. Pending the start of UNDP disarmament programmes once funding has been approved, the Government of the Central African Republic has made available some funds to each committee for sensitization and buy-back operations in an attempt to revive the programmes. It is hoped that the Government will intensify such assistance in the period leading up to the presidential elections.

Civilian police component

33. The results of the fifth training session for the Gendarmerie nationale, conducted by the MINURCA training team of 24 civilian police officers, are reflected in my last report (para. 28). The sixth training session, for 43 officers and commanders, began on 26 April and is still in progress. The second training session for the National Police ended on 16 April, with the graduation of 131 law enforcement officers and 41 police inspectors.

V. RESTRUCTURING AND DEMOBILIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

34. On 3 May, the National Assembly adopted as a group the four bills on the restructuring of the armed forces, by a partisan majority vote of 57 to 47. The opposition voted against the bills, which they had supported in the earlier drafting stages, because of their objections to the definition in the text of the Special Defence Force of the Republican Institutions.

35. The four new laws concern the establishment and organization of national defence; the establishment of the Supreme Council for National Defence; and crisis management. Their promulgation by Presidential Decree is expected in the next few days.

Restructuring

36. Pursuant to the adoption of these laws, the programme of restructuring the armed forces has focused on the training of the military personnel of the Central African armed forces. In accordance with the plan developed by the joint Government/MINURCA Committee on Restructuring Laws and Decrees, MINURCA has already embarked on a three-month programme of lectures and seminars on such matters as democracy, human rights and the role of the army under a democratic regime.

Demobilization

37. Preparatory work to facilitate the retirement of 630 of some 859 elements of the Central African armed forces who were due for retirement three or four years ago has been completed. The main stumbling block is the Government's lack of resources to pay the gratuity and pensions to which the retirees are legally entitled.

38. As noted in my last report (para. 31), demobilization is also proceeding in accordance with the UNDP-financed National Programme for the Demobilization and Reintegration of the armed forces. The main goals of the programme are to relieve tensions within the armed forces through the departure of those wishing to be integrated into civil life; to reduce the military salaries component of the defence budget; and to promote the reintegration of former officers into society in an economically productive manner.

39. This programme is facing a number of constraints, however. In addition to the need for some $3.1 million to fund the programme, certain risks are perceived in proceeding in the absence of the establishment of a national republican army, ethnically and sociologically balanced and respectful of democratic institutions. A coherent plan for army restructuring satisfactory to donors will also be required, as well as a clear commitment by the Government to meet its obligations to pay salary arrears and retirement pensions.

VI. ECONOMIC ASPECTS

40. The economic reform programme of the Central African Republic has made major progress in several areas during the first few months of 1999. Within the reporting period, the National Assembly has adopted a series of laws designed to promote economic and social reforms. Among these are the law for the privatization of PETROCA, the State-run petroleum products company; the law on the dissolution of the State Holding for Water (Société nationale des eaux); the laws dissolving the two Labour Offices (Office national de la main-d'oeuvre and Organisation nationale interprofessionelle de formation et de perfectionnement) and replacing them with the Agency for Employment (Agence centrafricaine pour la formation professionelle et l'emploi); and the law on the statute of the civil service. These laws were adopted in the context of the Government's economic and financial programme supported by an arrangement under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

41. In the light of the overall improved performance in programme implementation, external support for the Central African Republic is likely to resume in the coming months. The Executive Board of IMF is expected to consider the completion of the mid-term review in mid-June, which could permit the disbursement of a second tranche under the ESAF arrangement in mid-June. Further support from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Union, and other bilateral donors could follow during the second half of 1999.

42. Nevertheless, the weak revenue position of the Government of the Central African Republic remains a major obstacle to the sustained progress of economic and social reforms. Further efforts are necessary to improve revenue

collection, particularly at customs posts, and there are indications that the Government has taken steps to improve the management of the customs service. The Government is currently receiving technical assistance from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, among others, in this area. Revenue shortages have continued to prevent the Government from paying public sector salaries on time. Accordingly, my Special Representative, Mr. Oluyemi Adeniji, has continued to put pressure on the authorities of the Central African Republic to stress the need to follow through on the reforms now being put in place so as to accelerate the drive for increased revenue generation.

VII. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

43. The revised budget for the operation of MINURCA for the current financial period (1998-1999) and the proposed budget for the biennium 1999-2000 amount on a full-cost basis to $65.9 million and $32.2 million, respectively. The Fifth Committee of the General Assembly has already considered the budgets during its current meetings and I expect the Assembly to take action on them shortly.

44. With regard to the estimated costs associated with the supportive role that MINURCA has been authorized to play in the conduct of the presidential elections, I shall submit my proposals to the General Assembly at a later date, when the full related requirements have been determined, the necessary personnel and logistical plans finalized and all parameters for the support of the elections established.

45. As at 15 May 1999, unpaid assessed contributions to the MINURCA special account amounted to $15.7 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $1.6 billion.

VIII. OBSERVATIONS

46. The overall political situation has remained relatively calm. The National Assembly has been operating normally, the Deputies from both the Mouvance présidentielle and the opposition playing active roles in its deliberations. This has facilitated the consideration and adoption of laws on the restructuring of the Central African armed forces, and on economic reform, in accordance with the undertakings made to me by President Patassé in his letter dated 23 January 1999. In this context, I note the steps taken to privatize PETROCA and other State-run enterprises, the revision of the electoral code and the adoption by the National Assembly of the four draft laws on the restructuring of the armed forces.

47. However, the measures taken so far have not yielded enhancements in national revenues, which continue to fall below expectations. This is a clear indication that the Government must make further determined efforts to address the financial situation in the country. My Special Representative and the heads of the programmes and agencies of the United Nations system in Bangui will continue to encourage the Prime Minister to take measures to ensure a noticeable

improvement in the economy, in keeping with the programme agreed upon with IMF and the World Bank.

48. The persistent distrust among the leaders of the Mouvance présidentielle and the opposition has subjected the inauguration of the Electoral Commission to considerable delay. Intensive work has to be done to finalize and implement the planning required to ensure that the organization and conduct of the presidential elections can be completed in the short time remaining. I urge the Council to endorse the electoral support plan submitted by MINURCA, which is based on the minimum that is required, in the difficult circumstances prevailing within the Central African Republic, to ensure an acceptable level of observation of the freedom and fairness of the election process.

49. In paragraph 25 above, I stated that the additional military personnel required to assist the elections could be accommodated within the existing MINURCA force structure, but that I would not hesitate to request the Council for additional troops to restore the security of the Mission if I considered it to be at risk. I will indeed make every effort to remain within the authorized level of 1,350 military personnel, and will keep the Council fully informed of any relevant developments in this respect.

50. The withdrawal of Chadian forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo is being closely monitored. Although the security situation in the Central African Republic has been calm, the possibility of a rebel advance as far as the Oubangi River could give rise to some volatility. I intend to keep the Security Council fully informed of any potential threats to stability and security in the Central African Republic, especially as they might affect United Nations personnel or threaten the electoral process.

51. Given the steps taken by the Government since my last report, the Security Council may wish to note the progress made so far, to encourage the Government to continue with its reforms, and to improve revenue generation. An expression of support from the Council, as well as financial assistance from bilateral donors, for the continued restructuring of the armed forces and the police and gendarmerie would also be very helpful. Further progress in the establishment of a well-trained and adequately equipped security force is essential in view of the volatility of the situation within and around the Central African Republic.

52. The urgency with which these reforms must be implemented and the need for planning and preparations for the elections cannot be overstressed. The delays experienced so far, especially in the establishment of the Electoral Commission, have seriously impaired the degree to which MINURCA can assist the process, having regard to the deadlines imposed by the Constitution of the Central African Republic and the 15 November expiration date of the Mission's mandate. The deployment plans outlined above for electoral support are essential to make the election credible. Any further delay or reduction in the level of electoral support may place at risk the entire purpose towards which MINURCA and the Government have been working since the initial deployment of the Mission.

53. Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative and to the Force Commander, Major General Barthélémy Ratanga (Gabon), and to all the personnel of MINURCA, for their efforts during the reporting period.

United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic: contributions as at 24 May 1999

Country	Staff observers	Support unit	Troops	Total
Burkina Faso	6		120	126
Canada	4	-	51	55[a]
Chad	6	-	118	124
Côte d'Ivoire	8	15	210	233
Egypt	8	200	120	328
Gabon	8	-	120	128[b]
Senegal	9	-	120	129
Togo	6	-	120	126
Total	55	215	979	1 249[c]

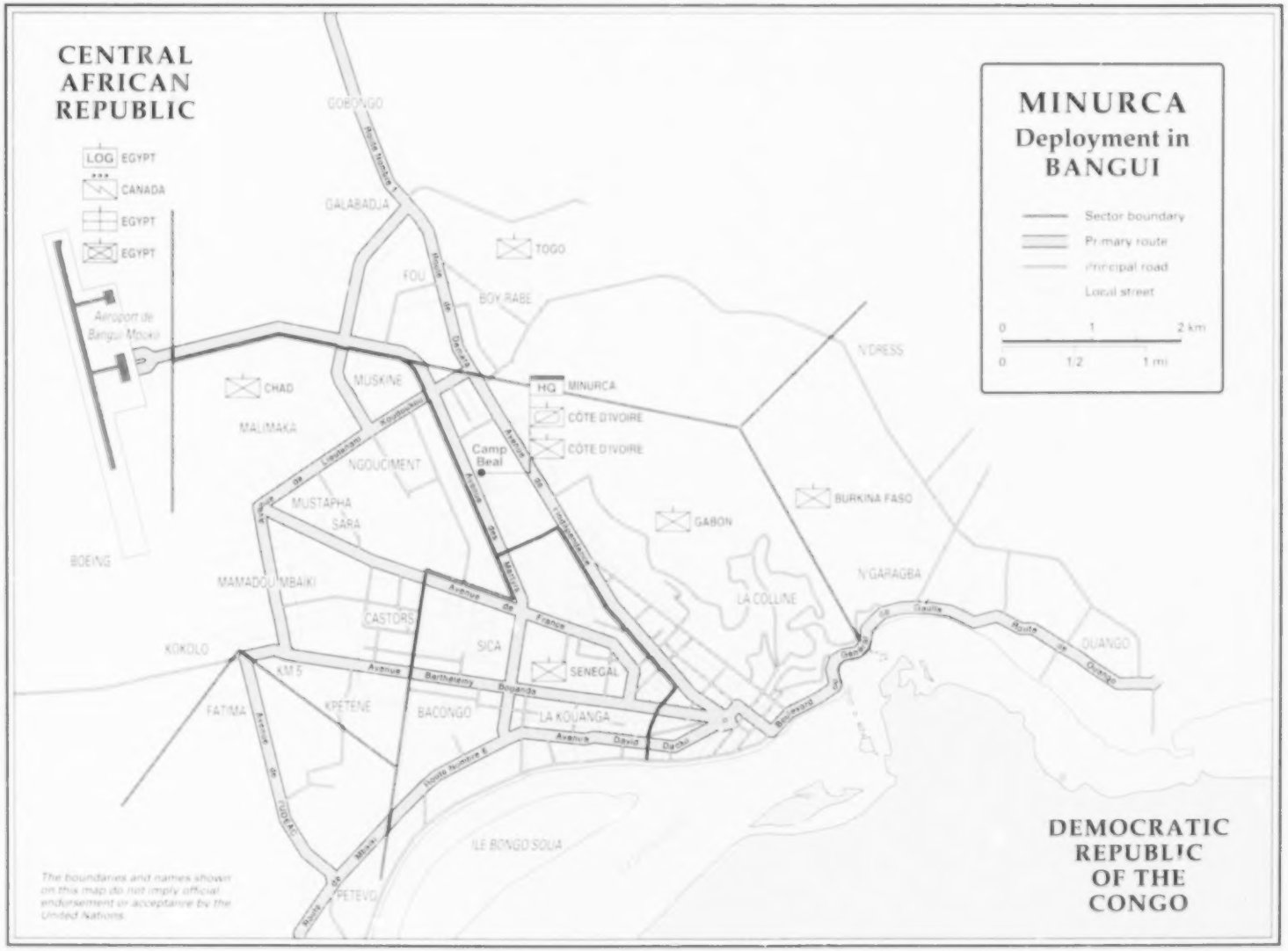
[a] Excluding national support elements (22).

[b] In addition to the Force Commander.

[c] In addition to 24 civilian police observers from Benin (2), Cameroon (1), Côte d'Ivoire (1), France (7), Mali (6), Portugal (2), Senegal (3) and Tunisia (2).

Map No. 4048 UNITED NATIONS
April 1998

Department of Public Information
Cartographic Section



Map No. 4060 Rev. 3 UNITED NATIONS
June 1999

Department of Public Information
Cartographic Section